



18 August 2011

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive

Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

Mr. Geoffrey Blackwell, Chief
Office of Native Affairs and Policy
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Blackwell,

I am writing to ask for your support in providing nearly 80,000 low-income Native Americans with discounted land lines and cell phone service.

I commend the Federal Communication Commission for establishing the Lifeline and Link Up programs to help ensure that telecommunications services are available to all people of the United States, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular and high-cost areas. A key group of rural Americans that often lack access to these services are participants in the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). FDPIR serves as an alternative to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and provides a monthly package of food to low-income households living on or near Indian reservations. FDPIR participants often live in rural areas far from SNAP offices and retail stores. Over 270 tribes in 24 states tribes administer FDPIR.

It has been brought to my attention that individuals are automatically eligible for the Lifeline and Link Up programs if they participate in SNAP. However, because FDPIR is an alternative to SNAP for low-income individuals, USDA does not permit FDPIR participants to receive SNAP benefits. Therefore, the nearly 80,000 low-income individuals receiving FDPIR each month are not automatically eligible for Lifeline or Link Up unless they participate in other Federal programs that you have recognized as conferring eligibility.

FDPIR's eligibility criteria are nearly identical to SNAP's and similar to the other Federal Programs that automatically qualify an individual for Lifeline or Link Up. Therefore, I ask that you require the organizations providing Lifeline or Link Up services to include FDPIR in the list of programs which confers automatic eligibility.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. Should you or your staff have questions, please contact Duke Storen, Director, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA at (703) 305-1431 or Duke.Storen@fns.usda.gov. Again, thank you for your support of providing access to telecommunications for all Americans.

Sincerely,

/s/ SIGNED-Steven Carlson for
Audrey Rowe
Administrator